

Learning Link Scotland

Annual Report 2005–2006



Introducing Learning Link Scotland

Learning Link Scotland **supports, promotes, represents and develops** adult learning in the voluntary sector. This report gives a flavour of our work over the past year and highlights our main achievements.

Chair's Report

I am delighted to present this annual report. It demonstrates both the range and the volume of our activities.

Our services are based on thorough planning and evaluation to make sure that they are inclusive, effective and efficient.

As well as services to members, we contributed our expertise, knowledge and understanding to the development of lifelong learning policy through strategic partnership, proactive dialogue and representational activities.

I would like to congratulate all staff for continuing to make a significant impact on adult education policy and practice. My thanks also to our member representatives, who volunteer their time to the executive and policy committees. They contribute greatly to the leadership, governance and direction of the organisation, whilst reflecting the needs and aspirations of voluntary organisations throughout Scotland.

Joyce Connon



Director's Report

The passion, commitment and energy of our staff team are evident from the impact our work has made on members, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of Scotland's lifelong learning sector. We are confident of this because we have the evidence to prove it.

Over the past year, we developed our internal capacity so we could systematically monitor, track and evaluate what we do. This has become central to our culture of organisational learning and development. Matched with strengthened financial and quality management, we are on a secure footing for the future.

We celebrate success following completion of Links to Literacies, our adult literacies pathfinder project, as well as three other major projects. I would like to thank all staff members and partners who contributed to this achievement.

We have maintained and developed excellent working relationships with partners across lifelong learning policy, practice and theory, resulting in a high degree of credibility and mutual respect.

We now look forward to working with partners and members on new and exciting projects, which will build on our experience and respond creatively to the needs of the sector.

Jayne Stuart



The Learning Link Scotland network is **tackling disadvantage**, with members working together for equality and social justice.

Here's how...

Working Together for Common Goals

Education and learning is the key to lasting change and improving social and economic wellbeing. The voluntary adult learning sector tackles disadvantage through its innovative approaches to education and its flexible and friendly attitude to people. We are confident that our sector can contribute to making Scotland a social, economic and political world-class leader.

Supporting the Membership

Over the past year, we supported a membership of 130 voluntary adult learning organisations, which operate with a workforce of around 38,000 volunteers and 3,900 paid staff. Across Scotland, members engaged with over 150,000 adults including learners from ethnic minority backgrounds, single parents, unemployed people, carers, people with disabilities and the rurally isolated.

Making an Impact

Our members are central to delivering Scotland's social inclusion, lifelong learning and active citizenship targets and ensuring equality and social justice. They are based in remote areas and city centres and include small community-based organisations such as the Whale Arts Agency and national organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association and LEAD Scotland. We provide the vital link, bringing this diversity together.

Looking Ahead

We will continue to support, promote, represent and develop the voluntary adult learning sector to ensure its influence in planning, shaping and delivering lifelong learning services and policy.

We will encourage our members to debate and discuss the 'big ideas', the current trends and the creative concepts, ensuring that education and learning is central to Scotland's future development.

"It is through education and lifelong learning that we can best deal with our inequalities and wasted human potential."

First Minister's lecture, Scotland's Future, 2006

- The **130** member organisations in the Learning Link Scotland network provided services to the most disadvantaged communities in Scotland
- **150,000** adults improved their lives through connecting with the Learning Link Scotland network

Learning Link Scotland is **building a strong resilient** voluntary adult learning sector equipped to deliver adult education that tackles disadvantage and enhances democracy.

Here's how...

"I wanted you all to know that your programme was excellent. It was by and for CLD [Community Learning and Development] and it related to the audience not above or below them. You used this event to serve the goals and values of the sector. I have now attended one conference in 20 that talked to me, not down to me."

Dr. Geoffrey Wallace, Emeritus Professor, University of Dundee

Of **1,284** participants from **962** organisations supported and trained:

- **87%** reported improved knowledge and skills
- **91%** rated delivery good to excellent
- **90%** identified a specified positive impact on their own and their organisation's work

Working Together

Jointly with partners, we organised large-scale events attracting 503 participants from 319 organisations. 93% of the participants surveyed indicated that these events and sessions would have an impact on their work. Committed to Working Together events in Perth and Inverness explored partnership and community learning and development while Making it Work seminars in Lockerbie and Stranraer tackled community planning.

Developing Workforce Skills

We work closely with members on continuous professional development. For example, we ran sessions hosted by Action and Ideas, Meridian and ALFiE. Through our Broadening Horizons project, we hosted training on the Disability Discrimination Act as well as Skills for Success personal development training for those moving into new roles as volunteers, employees and managers.

Increasing Capacity

We developed capacity of member organisations through our annual funding seminar; workshops on quality frameworks and information management; and one-to-one outreach support for funding, marketing and delivery. Though bimonthly newsletters and regular bulletins, our information service kept members up to date and informed.

Understanding Needs

Knowing, understanding and supporting our members' needs underpin our approach. For example, we developed and improved systems for evaluating members' views of our events; we researched relevant issues for the sector; and consulted members about the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Through our survey of management and performance information systems used by members, we gained a comprehensive picture of how the voluntary sector collects monitoring information about community learning and development and where the gaps are.

Learning Link Scotland is **enhancing democracy**, ensuring that a collective voice for the voluntary adult learning sector is heard at all levels of decision-making.

Here's how...

"The points you raised during the meeting with the Minister, as well as the separate discussions that you have had with myself and colleagues, have already had a strong influence on us, helping to cement our sense that this area is one which merits attention."

Karen McAvenue, Team Leader, Scottish Executive

- We represented the interests of Learning Link Scotland network on 20 committees and groups
- We influenced policy through 20 meetings with government and four with elected members
- We developed and supported 17 local and national networks to link policy and practice

Representing Members' Interests

We represent our members nationally and ensure that policy and decision-makers hear their views. During the year, we met Allan Wilson MSP, Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Communities and Peter Peacock, Minister for Education and Young People.

We encourage members to contribute to consultations. We responded to consultations including The Big Lottery in Scotland, the Scottish Executive ESOL Strategy and Charity References in Documents. We participated in pre-consultation meetings with the Scottish Executive about Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) and the Lifelong Learning Strategy refreshes.

Developing Citizenship

Many member organisations provide opportunities for local people to engage with local, national and global issues and take action to improve their communities. This has inspired us to provide training in political literacy and community engagement to assist groups to work on these issues with learners.

Strengthening the Infrastructure

Improving local services is a vital aspect of our work. Links to Literacies demonstrated the challenges in gaining a voice in adult literacy partnerships and influencing planning and delivery. Lead to Change encouraged communication between voluntary sector groups, national policy makers and community and local development planning partnerships.

Informing Thinking

We conducted various research projects during the year. These included the voluntary sector role in community learning and development; awareness and understanding of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; issues affecting rural communities involved in capacity building (in partnership with the University of Dundee, Highland Council and Perth and Kinross Council); and how the sector records and uses performance information (for Learning Connections).

Learning Link Scotland is **advancing adult education** to meet challenges and opportunities and to realise our vision for Scotland's future.

Here's how...

"Learning Link Scotland provide ways for us to share our good practice across our area and with policy makers. Highly participatory events to join practice to policy have become Learning Link's signature."

Joyce Harkness, Annandale and Eskdale CVS, speaking about the Making it Work events in May 2005

A survey of **90** voluntary organisations involved in our Links to Literacies project found that:

- Staff trained in literacies awareness increased from **36% to 91%**
- Staff receiving Introductory Training in Adult Literacies Learning increased from **12% to 90%**

Developing the Vision

A key priority over the past year has been to engage partners, members and their learners in creating a vision for adult learning. Through events such as Dialogue at Dinner, we brought people together informally to gather views, encompassing many different voices in the process. Building on this focus on dialogue, we are organising 'Come All Ye', an annual festival of learning, bringing together stakeholders from different sectors.

Thinking at the Cutting Edge

We use imaginative approaches such as appreciative inquiry, participatory appraisal, philosophical inquiry and collaborative inquiry to empower communities and practitioners. For example, through our Making it Work events in Lockerbie and Stranraer, we encouraged organisations to use creative concepts to become involved in community planning. We broadened practitioners' understanding of theory, policy and practice through Lead to Change with its themes of community learning and development and community

leadership. Through Broadening Horizons, we offered practitioners the opportunity to address social development; society, culture and equalities; and democratic participation.

Creating European Connections

We directed the Participatory Active Citizenship Tools project, working with European partners from Portugal, Norway, Belgium and Spain to share ways of engaging learners and communities in active decision-making. The final seminar in Scotland (Spring 2007) marks the launch of PACT With Potential, showcasing the many methods considered during the project.

Promoting Action Research

We supported and developed voluntary sector participation in planning and providing local adult literacy initiatives. Our Links to Literacies project concluded in March 2006. While making a significant impact, we have only 'scratched the surface' on various issues, indicating the need for further investigation into voluntary sector involvement in progressing adult literacies.

Finance 2006

INCOME

£

Grants Received	385,110
Other Income	73,447
TOTAL INCOME	458,557
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	422,127
Net Incoming Resources	36,430
Balance Brought Forward	47,436
TOTAL FUNDS at 31 March 2006	83,866

Auditors: Cowan & Partners, CA

Full audited accounts are available from Learning Link Scotland

Executive Committee

Chair	Joyce Connon
Vice Chair	Rona Connolly (until Oct 05) Fiona Craig (from Oct 05)
Treasurer	Asma Abdalla (until Oct 05) Rona Connolly (from Oct 05)
Members	Asma Abdalla Ed Garrett Nicola Gilbert Christine Kennedy

Funders



Europe and Scotland
Making it **work together**



LOTTERY FUNDED



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